

## ***Creating and Initiating the “One Bag a Week Challenge”***

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### **January 18th 2016 1:20pm-2:50pm 1.5 hours**

I made the draft forms for my contest. There is a lot of information to be relayed, and there are also many variables that one doesn't see right away until you start doing a project or experiment. For me, it was house type and household size, which affect how much one family wastes a week. A family of six living in a large home is more likely to put out more trash than a single person living alone in an apartment.

My knowledge with the commission has helped me in coming up with a form that touches on all aspects of sustainability. I had three main things to address to the contestants: how much did they waste before, what they are going to do to waste less and how to waste less, and what they learned from this contest. What I created was a draft form, so I did not perfect it at that moment.

I was really interested in how the contestants would address the questions and how they would go about the contest. I'm excited!

### **January 18th 2016 6pm-7:30pm 1.5 hours**

My mentor and I met to go over the draft form. My mentor, Leslie, really liked my forms and said all that was needed was just smoothing out some questions and adjusting some just a bit. The layout of the form was also pleasing to her. All I needed to do now was make the forms more organized and change a few questions here and there to be more specific or direct. Overall, we feel we are moving close to starting to get the word out for this contest.

### **February 6th 2016 2pm-4pm 2 hours**

I tested out the various carbon footprint calculators online; to see which one would best give information on the carbon output from your household waste. I found that the Nature.org one worked out the best. This carbon footprint calculator gave information on how much CO<sub>2</sub> you emit per year (in tons) from recycling and waste. It also shows what percentage it takes up of your total emissions.

I also looked up other information pertaining to my contest, like the gallon-size of a standard kitchen trash bag. This all helped me solidify my forms and the data I will use and refer back to when analyzing the forms. I learned a lot about the importance of making sure your data is accurate, as it validates your findings in the end or totally skews them.

### **February 11th 2016 6pm-7pm 1 hour**

My mentor, Leslie, and I met to finalize our timeline for the contest, and to give the forms a final review. The forms looked good, so we approved to move forward with them. As for our timeline, the whole month of March will be dedicated to the contest. This means the forms will have to be sent out to the signed up contestants before then, ideally.

### **February 18th 2016 7pm-8pm 1 hour**

My mentor, Leslie, and I met once more before releasing out the forms. I have a few people signed up so far, and I will continue to spread the word of my contest. But we are ready to start the contest. This meeting was crucial in setting our contest with confidence. We made sure our timeline was correct, and that the contest would run from February 26th to March 26th, giving the contestants ample time to implement their “waste less” solutions.

### **February 26th 2016 8pm-12am 4 hours**

I created a quick “Directions” sheet for the contest because it became clear to me that it would help the contestants understand what to do without me having to write it out in one long email. I created the sheet explaining what to do for each of the sections and gave examples. I also finalized my outreach, and created the contact group with over 30 people. This outreach took a while too, but I mostly accomplished it through word of mouth. I was surprised to see how many people were interested in doing this, and I am also excited to see what they learn.

I sent the email out with the “Instructions Form” and the “Contest Form” to my email group, and I introduced myself and this contest. I made sure to make it as simple and short as I can, not only to make sure this contest does not seem intimidating, but also to make sure the email isn’t an essay long, which would bore people.

### **March 1st 2016 7pm-8:30pm 1.5 hours**

My mentor, Leslie, and I had a meeting to review what we would potentially be looking at when the contestants sent in their forms. We had to make sure that what we were looking at was demonstrative of the contestant and their efforts to reduce their waste output, which would include Re-using, Reducing, and Recycling (the three R’s). It won’t be too complicated to judge the forms, but we had to lay a foundation for what we would judge them upon, criteria.

### **March 28th 2016 7pm - 10pm 3 hours**

I looked over all the forms today and judged them. I had not created a point system to determine the winners. I judged them based on three things: their information display and how much detail they added, their trash output at the end of the week, and their learning experience, which was described by them at the end of the form. I looked over them and was shocked, and excited, to see some patterns! Real science before my eyes!

Some of the patterns I saw were very interesting. For example, many, if not all, of the contestants have expressed that they waste a lot of food. A lot. It did not matter whether they were pertaining to a small household or a big household; they always end up throwing away a big amount of leftover food. Some started composting, and some started buying less, and eating in reasonable portions. Also, almost all of them stated how shocked they were to find out how much food they waste.

The second thing I noticed is that 13-gallon kitchen trash bags are more common than I thought. Personally, expected the contestants to use plastic bags from the store, and was ready to do conversions, but I was surprised. The amount that people waste a week also did not follow regular expectations regarding household type, but it did follow household size. Contestants who had a larger household size generally put out more waste than those who have a smaller household size.

Lastly, I realized the magic number is five. The number five represents the amount of bags that most of the contestants normally throw out at the end of the week. I don't know why it is like that, but most contestants, regardless of household size and type, the most common amount of bags wasted at the end of the week was five 13-gallon kitchen trash bags.

Either way, this experience was enriching and very fulfilling, Not only did it educate me on the waste routines of other youth, but also from the diverse and shared struggles of certain items that is thrown away too often without second thought of recycling.

I applaud all the contestants for their effort and sacrifice of wasting less. I know it is tough, but my warriors battled it out for a better and sustainable future. And it is with the most honor and delight to announce my three winners, in order by place:

1. Alicia Ortiz
2. Maria Hernandez
3. Ana Bautista

Sustainability Commission  
member Edgar Sanchez presents  
the “One Bag a Week” challenge  
winners to the Commission



Sanchez commends the students  
for accepting the “One Bag a  
Week” challenge



(From left to right) “One Bag a  
Week” challenge winners:  
3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Ana Bautista  
2<sup>nd</sup> Place- Maria Hernandez  
1<sup>st</sup> Place- Alicia Ortiz

